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Thursday, 21 June 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Azad	(Bangladesh)
Members:	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Franco
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Kasse
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Singapore	Ms. Lee
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts

Report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574).

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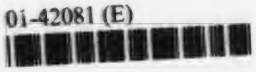

The meeting resumed at 3.20 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Nepal in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bhattari (Nepal) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Sweden. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

Conflict prevention lies at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. In its presidential statement of July 2000, this Council underlined the overriding humanitarian and moral imperative as well as the economic advantages of preventing the outbreak and escalation of conflicts. Over the last couple of years, the Security Council has paid increasing attention to the significance of preventive activities and to the need to create a culture of prevention. The report by the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict, before us today, mirrors the commitment on the part of the Security Council, as well as of the wider United Nations system and its Member States, to strengthen our collective measures in this field.

The European Union commends the Secretary-General for his long-standing effort to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. We warmly welcome his recent report as part of that effort, appreciating its thorough review of progress achieved in developing the conflict-prevention strategy of the United Nations, as well as the report's many concrete recommendations for further improvements. One of the report's particular strengths lies in its comprehensive approach and its emphasis on the importance of coordination and cooperation between the wide range of actors to ensure effective preventive strategies. As the Secretary-General points out, many United Nations actors — as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector — have important roles to play.

Improving coordination is vital for effective prevention. The European Union recently adopted a programme for the prevention of violent conflicts, in which cooperation with the United Nations is a prominent feature. The programme declares that European Union (EU) actions will be undertaken in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, in keeping with the primary role of the United Nations in conflict prevention. It recalls that the main responsibility for conflict prevention rests with the parties concerned and reiterates the importance of local and regional capacity-building. Also, it stipulates that the European Union will set out clear political priorities for preventive actions, improve its early warning, action and policy coherence, and enhance its instruments for long- and short-term prevention.

The EU programme, like the Secretary-General's report, emphasizes moreover the need to build and sustain effective and mutually reinforcing partnerships for prevention, between the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations and civil society. To this end, and in line with the modalities for such cooperation agreed on by the High-level United Nations-Regional Organizations Meeting in July 1998, the European Union has recently adopted guidelines for an intensified interaction with the United Nations in the areas of conflict prevention and crisis management. Specific themes for this cooperation include regional issues, civilian and military aspects of crisis management and, in the particular field of conflict prevention, exchange of information, cooperation on fact-finding, coordination of diplomatic activity and field coordination and training.

The Secretary-General's report contains close to 30 recommendations, aimed at mobilizing the

collective potential of the United Nations system, with greater coherence and focus on conflict prevention. The recommendations are pertinent and wise, and several of them can be implemented without requiring additional resources. For example, the European Union supports the proposal for closer interaction between the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and considers that practical arrangements for this should not be hard to find.

Noting that the recommendations are addressed to a wide range of organs and actors, the European Union looks forward to elaborating its position when the proposals are dealt with in the various relevant forums. The deliberations in the General Assembly, envisaged for mid-July, will provide an opportunity to present at greater length and in more detail the comprehensive position of the European Union on the totality of the Secretary-General's recommendations. In that connection, we stand ready to participate in the development of a practical road map to implement the specific recommendations contained in the report, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

However, the report also contains a number of interesting recommendations addressed specifically to this Council. The European Union notes with satisfaction statements made by Security Council members in today's debate indicating their willingness to take action in follow-up to the Secretary-General's report. The European Union believes that these recommendations merit close attention, including the proposal that the Security Council consider some innovative mechanisms for discussions on prevention cases on a continuing basis, with regard either to reports submitted by the Secretary-General or to early warning or other prevention cases brought to the Council's attention by Member States.

In this connection, we recall the crucial role given the Secretary-General in Article 99 of the United Nations Charter: to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. The intention of the Secretary-General to initiate a practice of providing periodic regional and subregional reports to the Security Council is important in that regard. As to the contributions by Member States, the European Union notes with appreciation the innovative and valuable provision in the recent Security Council resolution on the Democratic Republic of the Congo requesting both the Secretary-General and Member States to make proposals on how to address the interrelated crises in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Other important recommendations addressed to the Security Council, among others, include to make more active use of preventive deployments before the onset of conflict; to support peace-building components within peacekeeping operations; to include a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations; to make full use of information and analyses emanating from the United Nations human rights mechanisms and bodies; to invite the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to brief the Council on situations where there is a substantial risk of a humanitarian emergency, and to call for and support the implementation of preventive protection and assistance activities by United Nations agencies in such situations; and to give greater attention to gender perspectives in its conflict-prevention and peace-building activities.

These are all useful and practical proposals with the potential to enhance notably the capacity of the Security Council in the field of prevention, and to mirror the European Union's own efforts to enhance its own conflict-prevention and crisis-management capabilities. The European Union encourages the Security Council to consider carefully these recommendations as well as possible complementary and additional measures.

The Secretary-General points to several important principles for replacing the prevailing culture of reaction with a culture of prevention. Among them, the European Union notes in particular that conflict prevention is one of the primary obligations of Member States set forth in the United Nations Charter. Other core principles include that prevention should be in conformity with international law and that will not be successful without local ownership and a firm commitment to its principles by national actors. As the Secretary-General points out, early action taken nationally to alleviate conditions that could lead to armed conflict can help strengthen the sovereignty of States.

The European Union considers that conflict prevention calls for a cooperative approach to facilitate peaceful solutions to disputes, and that preventive

strategies should be developed so that action can be initiated at the earliest possible stage of a conflict cycle. In that way, actions can be most effective and, ideally, large-scale operations can be avoided. The European Union looks forward to working with other Member States in developing such strategies. Conflict prevention efforts create an environment that reinforces sustained and equitable development, and vice versa. As the Secretary-General points out, investing in conflict prevention offers the potential for multiple returns for national development over the longer term.

The report also highlights the comprehensive nature of conflict prevention, involving operational and structural elements, and short- and long-term measures. An effective preventive strategy requires that deep-rooted socio-economic, cultural, environmental, institutional and structural causes be addressed. And it entails political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures. In this context, the European Union stresses the importance of adherence to international law, not least the conventions on human rights and international refugee law, and reiterates that applying the rule of law in relations between States and ensuring respect for human rights reduce the risk of violent conflict. Good governance, basic principles of democracy and transparency, and the responsibility and commitment of political leaders are similarly important elements in the context of conflict prevention.

Finally, in his report the Secretary-General recalls that the United Nations has a moral responsibility to ensure that genocides such as that perpetrated in Rwanda are prevented from ever happening again. History has taught us — at times through horrendous lessons — our shortcomings. But the present also reveals that preventing widespread human suffering remains a commanding challenge for individual States and our collective organ, the United Nations. We, the Member States, must improve our common understanding and approach, build and support sustained political will and commitment, and increase our readiness to take action, combining in creative and coordinated ways the tools at our disposal. The European Union recognizes the dimensions of the task but remains convinced that progress can, and must, be made.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Republic of Korea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table to make his statement.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): At the outset I would like to welcome you, Mr. Minister, and express my deep gratitude to you for handling this open debate on the prevention of armed conflict.

As the Secretary-General emphasized in his report, the primary responsibility for preventing conflict lies with nations themselves. However, in an age when we are facing ever-increasing challenges related to international peace and security, the role of the United Nations is becoming more and more pivotal. We firmly believe that the prevention of such conflicts largely hinges on the preventive capacity of the United Nations and its Member States. Indeed, conflict prevention lies at the heart of the United Nations mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security, which emphasizes the Organization's mission "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

My delegation fully supports the Secretary-General's intention to move the United Nations from a "culture of reaction" to a "culture of prevention," a notion that is closely tied to the vision of a "culture of peace." As has been made evident by the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor in recent years, United Nations efforts to resolve conflicts once they have already escalated are often futile. But while it is generally acknowledged that conflict prevention is far more cost-effective, in both human and financial terms, than post-conflict management, the political will and financial commitment of Member States are often elusive in the earliest stages of conflicts.

Furthermore, as the Secretary-General noted in his report, while a large number of Member States have expressed their support for conflict prevention during previous open debates, they often have different priorities for action. In this regard, the Republic of Korea favours a comprehensive approach that encompasses democratization, respect for human rights and the rule of law, socio-economic development and the promotion of good governance.

I would like to comment on a few of the issues raised in the Secretary-General's report that are of particular importance to my delegation.

First, my delegation fully agrees with the Secretary-General's recommendations for strengthening the capacities of the principal United Nations organs for conflict prevention. In particular, we support the

recommendation that the General Assembly consider a more active use of its powers in the prevention of armed conflict and explore ways of enhancing its interaction with the Security Council in developing long-term conflict prevention and peace-building strategies. Greater interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council would enhance transparency and ensure that the views of the Member States on conflict prevention are heard.

Secondly, my delegation notes that the broader, more holistic approach to conflict prevention has emerged in response to the growing realization that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the structural root causes of conflicts. In fact, the most effective form of conflict prevention may be the pursuit of sustainable development and democratization, areas in which the Economic and Social Council can and should play a more active role. In this regard, the multifaceted nature of conflict prevention requires enhanced cooperation within the United Nations system, particularly among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Thirdly, recognizing that a stable social environment is key to preventing the outbreak or recurrence of a conflict, my delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that we devote greater resources to the United Nations humanitarian agencies and integrate preventive activities into the work of these agencies in pre-crisis situations. In particular, we stress the need to advocate for the protection and welfare of women and children and to mobilize international support for the fight against HIV/AIDS. My delegation looks forward to the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS next week and to the special session on children this September and hopes that they will bring forth tangible results.

Fourthly, my delegation believes that the United Nations should continue to strengthen its relationship with a wide array of international actors, particularly regional organizations, and pursue regional preventive strategies. We recognize that, due to their proximity, regional organizations are often more attuned to the situation on the ground and can therefore develop effective institutional capacities for early warning and conflict prevention, such as the mechanisms established by the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West African States. For this reason, we are looking forward to the implementation of the follow-up measures to the Fourth High-level United Nations-Regional Organizations Meeting on conflict prevention and peace-building, held last February.

Fifthly, as the Brahimi report recommends the Secretary-General's more frequent use of fact-finding missions to areas of tension in support of short-term crisis-prevention action, we firmly support the enhancement of the preventive role of the Secretary-General. In this regard, we believe that the allocation of adequate financial resources for conflict prevention is essential. For its part, the Republic of Korea has contributed to the Trust Fund for Preventive Action since its inception in 1997 and intends to maintain this commitment.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my Government's unwavering support for efforts to enhance the preventive capacities of the United Nations, Member States and key international players. We hope that this debate will mobilize Member States towards a more effective strategy for conflict prevention.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Argentina. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): May I begin by thanking you, Sir, for your presence at this debate. I also want to commend the delegation of Bangladesh for the way in which it has presided over the work of the Security Council this month with great efficiency and transparency.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report on the prevention of armed conflict. We agree with his basic premise that we must move from a culture of reaction to one of prevention.

The prevention of armed conflict is a very broad subject because it involves different actors from both within and outside the United Nations. Given the fact that the issue will also be discussed in the General Assembly, in this forum I will focus on the Security Council's preventive role and on the need to coordinate this task with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. I will also refer to the deterrent role of the international criminal Tribunals.

We believe that the starting point of our analysis is the new concept of international security that has evolved since the end of the cold war. This new

concept requires the Security Council to re-examine the way in which it deals with the kinds of conflicts that the founders of our Organization had not envisaged. The majority of the conflicts of the post-cold-war era are domestic, with international repercussions. They emerge from complex and diverse causes, ranging from economic to ethnic and religious questions. The targets are no longer exclusively of a military nature. In many cases, the civilian population has become the main victim.

In this context, the role of prevention requires the Security Council to be aware of the deep-seated causes of all such conflicts. The Council does not always have such an awareness. That is why we believe that there are three specific instruments that could help the Council better to assess the pre-conflict situation and thus improve its decision-making process. Those instruments are already being used by the Council in conflict management. We feel that the challenge now is to use them more frequently in conflict prevention.

First, close and substantive cooperation is necessary between the Council and the regional and subregional organizations. We believe it important for the Council to convene regular meetings with high-ranking political officers of those organizations in order to exchange opinions and information. Last February, the Council met with the Lusaka Political Committee in connection with the situation in the Great Lakes region and with the Committee of Six of the Economic Community of West African States in connection with Sierra Leone. This trend towards a more fluid dialogue is undoubtedly positive and should be encouraged, but it is being implemented as a conflict-management tool. We believe that such meetings should also be convened in order to assess latent or potential conflicts.

Secondly, these comments apply to Security Council missions. Since September 1999, there has been a resumption of Council missions to affected countries. These missions are very positive because they allow the Council to gain direct knowledge of the reality of a conflict concerning which they will later be called to make decisions. We think that these missions must also be carried out with a preventive purpose in pre-conflict situations, with the consent of the parties concerned. That is why we deemed it important that, during the Council's mission in May to the Great Lakes region to address the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it took the decision to include Burundi — where there is a risk of full-scale confrontation — in its planned itinerary. The mission met with the facilitator of the peace process, former South African President Nelson Mandela, President Buyoya of Burundi and President Mkapa of Tanzania.

The third point that I wish to stress is the need for direct dialogue between the Security Council and the parties concerned. The practice of holding private meetings with the parties — which started to gain momentum in late 1999 — is, in our opinion, a step in the right direction. We also think that, in particular circumstances, the parties directly affected should have the opportunity to participate in the Council's informal consultations. The access of the parties to a conflict to the Security Council is a fundamental issue that deserves the Council's careful consideration, since it touches on the transparency and efficiency of its decision-making process. There is no doubt that conflict prevention is mostly viewed as a Chapter VI issue. However, in our view, conflict prevention does not preclude, in some specific cases, the application of Chapter VII of the Charter. We think that in some of the conflicts currently on the agenda of the Council, the application of an arms embargo in an early stage of the conflict would have helped prevent its worsening.

Information as to what is really happening on the ground is essential in any effective preventive action; without it the early warning systems can operate only with difficulty. Availability of information is necessary for successful preventive action, but it is not enough. It must be accompanied by the political will to act. When such political will existed, the Council deployed preventive peacekeeping operations in Macedonia and the Central African Republic. On other occasions, such as during the conflict in Rwanda in 1994, the genocide could have been avoided if certain members of the Council had garnered the political will to act. In the case of Rwanda, information was available.

Prevention also means creating the proper conditions for the rule of law, human rights, and coexistence, including religious tolerance, productive investments, access to health care, and equal economic and educational opportunities. This concept of prevention — which deals with the root causes of conflict, not the immediate ones — is a task for the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We believe that this task must be carried out in cooperation and coordination with the Security Council.

I would like to refer very briefly to the relation between the Security Council and Economic and Social Council. Even before the San Francisco Conference, the framers of the Charter had wisely established, in Dumbarton Oaks, a link between ECOSOC and Security Council through Article 65 of the Charter. Subsequent practice tells us, however, that only on one occasion, in 1949, did the Economic and Social Council, through the Secretary-General, convey to the Security Council the result of its deliberations on human rights in Palestine. Only once, in 1950, did the Security Council request a report from the Economic and Social Council on the civilian population in Korea. We think it is high time to revitalize Article 65 of the Charter.

Given that most of the conflicts on the Security Council's present agenda do not relate to conventional territorial disputes, but rather to ethnic reasons, religious intolerance, abject poverty, control over natural resources or systematic violations of human rights, an opportunity is created for the Economic and Social Council to cooperate with the Security Council through recommendations conducive to conflict prevention, an area which traditionally had seemed to be outside its sphere of competence. That is why we believe it would have been very useful to hold the joint Security Council — ECOSOC meeting proposed last April, during the United Kingdom Presidency. It would have signified the beginning of a dialogue among two of the principal bodies of the United Nations with the shared purpose of contributing to the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

We all agree on the need to coordinate the work of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council. I think we also need to reflect upon the issue of who is going to implement such coordination. We believe we must explore the possibility of a role for the Secretary-General in this regard.

Justice is an indispensable component of peace. In this context, the International Criminal Tribunals are another instrument for conflict prevention because they provide the perception that crimes against humanity, such as the ones committed in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, will not go unpunished. The work of these Tribunals must be fully supported. We think that the entering into force of the Rome Statute will have an important deterrent effect.

Prevention is a joint enterprise, which involves, with differing levels of responsibility, various actors: national governments, the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. These actors must perform their activities in a coordinated manner, and not in a competitive or exclusive fashion. We believe this to be one of the main messages from the report of the Secretary-General.

Finally, and above all, no preventive action will be effective unless the parties to a conflict have the political will to live the objectives of peace, reconstruction and development as their own objectives, and unless the international community, for its part, has the political will to support the prevention efforts, patiently and with the needed resources.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me and to Mr. Chowdhury.

The next speaker is the representative of Costa Rica. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, may I first of all congratulate you and, through you, the Republic of Bangladesh on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. We are aware of and grateful for the leadership that your delegation, under the direction of Ambassador Chowdhury, has been exercising in the defence of the interests and the positions of the developing countries within this important body. I also want to thank the Secretary-General for his valuable report on the prevention of armed conflict. We also appreciate the introduction provided to us this morning by the Deputy Secretary-General.

We trust that this report will be the subject of a broad discussion in each of the organs of the United Nations. Therefore on this occasion I will emphasize only those aspects that relate to the activities of the Security Council itself, while in the months to come we hope to discuss the relevant sections in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

My delegation agrees completely with the Secretary-General that the United Nations and the international community have the essential moral obligation to prevent armed conflict and other threats to international peace and security. This obligation

stems not only from the fundamental provisions of the United Nations Charter, but also from the basic principles of solidarity and fraternity among all human beings. This means that we cannot continue to be passive witnesses to innumerable acts of genocide, to massacres and to wars.

The promotion of peace requires a continued and sustained effort to create an environment of mutual respect and of rejection of violence. A genuine and sustainable peace can be achieved only when proper living conditions are insured for all our inhabitants and when there is a sufficient level of economic development for everyone to meet his basic needs, when fundamental human rights are respected and when social and political differences are resolved through democratic channels.

For this reason, early prevention of armed conflict means that we must confront the profound structural causes of crises. The effective prevention of conflicts thus requires that we adopt preventive measures aimed at meeting the many needs in relation to food, health, housing, drinking water, education, job training, employment, fair wages, productivity, competitiveness and access to opportunities. It also means that we must establish and strengthen democracy, good governance and respect for human rights.

We believe that in accordance with the wise distribution of competence established by the Charter, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are the appropriate bodies to implement and coordinate efforts to tackle the structural causes of armed conflicts. The Security Council, for its part, has the task of what has been termed operational prevention, which is aimed at adopting measures with regard to an imminent crisis.

Nonetheless, it is impossible to establish an iron-clad distinction among which activities must be carried out by which organ. For this reason, my delegation advocates the utmost coordination and cooperation between the Security Council, on the one hand, and the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly, on the other.

The Secretary-General has indicated to us that the fundamental responsibility for conflict prevention rests with governments and local authorities. This principle is correct to the extent that the government and authorities are effective, responsible and democratic. Unfortunately, historical experience has taught us that in many cases it is the governments and political leaders themselves who fuel social tension and promote armed conflict.

The harmful circumstances of poverty, underdevelopment, ethnic differences, health problems, gender differences, or lack of educational opportunities in and of themselves do not produce armed conflicts. These structural factors can cause violence only if there are political leaders that are prepared to incite to violence those groups that are voicing their claims. In this respect, the presence of political leaders who are prepared to handle social complaints and demands by violent means with a view to satisfying selfish political and economic ambitions is the real cause of, and an inevitable catalyst of, social violence and armed conflicts.

Allow me to offer a few concrete examples. Both in the Great Lakes region and in the Balkans, it was the political leaders, in the governments and in the opposition, who fuelled and made negative use of ethnic differences in order to consolidate their respective power bases. The political leaders intentionally ignited ethnic violence as an instrument for promoting their corrupt objectives. The armed conflicts and the genocide that we witnessed were the premeditated creation of precisely those who had the responsibility to defend the population.

In Zaire and in Haiti, the armed conflicts resulted from the actions of hardened, corrupt, dictatorial governments that turned their backs on the civilian population and established violence as the norm of political discourse and squandered national resources. The governments themselves created the conditions for conflagration.

My delegation believes that the principal means of preventing armed conflict over the long term is to support and demand practices of good government, the rule of law, democracy, representative government and respect for human rights. We welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to present to the Security Council periodic reports on potential threats to the peace. There is no doubt that this type of information will make it possible both for the Secretariat and for members of the Council to tackle the sources of conflict.

Nonetheless, we would recommend utmost prudence in this endeavour. Experience shows us that on some occasions, when international opinion is suddenly focused on a situation that is already tense,

the situation can become further destabilized, and it may be more difficult to find a peaceful way out of the crisis. In this respect, we believe that a careful, reserved and quiet exercise of preventive diplomacy may be preferable to public action by the Council. We must above all avoid allowing parties to a conflict from using the United Nations or the Security Council as a means to legitimize their claims or aspirations.

We are gratified to note the sending of fact-finding missions composed of permanent representatives of members of the Security Council. We recognize that on some occasions these can serve to convey important political messages. Nonetheless, we do believe that the scope of these missions must not be exaggerated. We wonder about the usefulness of a quick and superficial mission whose members are not experts in the region or experts regarding a specific conflict. For this reason my delegation would tend to favour in-depth investigative missions composed of real experts.

Furthermore, my delegation has serious doubts about the appropriateness of creating a new subsidiary body of the Security Council to study the subject of the prevention of armed conflicts. Our experience shows that the proliferation of Council committees reduces the Council's transparency, does not increase its effectiveness and limits its legitimacy.

In order to effectively prevent armed conflict the United Nations needs the firm and sustained support of all Member States. We must not forget the accusations levelled against us just a few months ago in the Brahimi report, which said that the failures of the Organization are the result of a lack of commitment on the part of Member States. For this reason, if we really want the United Nations to be capable of preventing conflicts, it is essential that we provide it with financial, operational and logistical resources that are commensurate with the magnitude of the task. If the Member States are not truly prepared to support the Organization, then they should not take on this new challenge.

The President: I thank the representative of Costa Rica for his kind words addressed to me, to my country and to Mr. Chowdhury.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 June 2001 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2001/616, and which reads as follows:

"I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held today, Thursday, 21 June 2001, regarding the agenda item, 'Role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts'."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the current debate, in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Akasaka (Japan): First of all, I would like to welcome your presence here today, Mr. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, and the assumption of the presidency of the Security Council by your country.

I would like to thank you, Sir, for affording non-members of the Council the opportunity to express their views on this important subject. I would like also to convey my appreciation to the Secretary-General for issuing his long-awaited comprehensive report on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574).

Since the last time the Security Council discussed this issue, we have witnessed growing international awareness of the importance of conflict prevention. I fully agree with the Secretary-General's view, as expressed in his report, that the time has come to translate the rhetoric of conflict prevention into concrete action.

Today I would like to offer Japan's preliminary comments on the roles of the Security Council and of the Secretariat in conflict prevention, on the understanding that we will have another opportunity to offer our views when the General Assembly takes up the same topic in mid-July.

First, let me speak of the role of the Security Council. We share the view that the Security Council needs to discuss cases of prevention on a continuous basis. As for the Council's efforts with regard to

preventive deployment, the dispatch of missions and new mechanisms suggested in the report, I would like to make the following comments.

On preventive deployment, the Secretary-General states in his report that past experience shows that preventive deployment can make a crucial contribution to conflict prevention. While we tend to concur with that statement, we consider it essential that the Council itself undertake a thorough appraisal and examination of its past preventive deployment efforts, such as the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force in Macedonia and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, taking into account what has happened since the departure of those missions. In that context, it should be noted that traditional peacekeeping missions, such as the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East, have prevented the recurrence of the conflicts in their respective areas of deployment. It should also be noted that a United Nations presence in East Timor after the departure of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor could be considered from that perspective.

Concerning the Security Council's fact-finding missions to regions at risk, my delegation agrees that such missions can be effective, particularly when deployed at the initial stages of a conflict. Before the Security Council decides to dispatch fact-finding missions in future, we would further like to see it identify concrete needs and clear objectives, based upon the assessment of the outcome of past missions. Clear criteria for sending such missions must be established; their terms of reference must be specified and their financing well clarified. In addition, the suggestion in the report of new mechanisms for the Security Council's discussion of prevention requires careful consideration, since these could duplicate the ongoing activities of the Secretariat.

Though the primary role in maintaining international peace and security lies with the Security Council, we believe that the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, with the flexibility they exercise through the dispatch of special representatives and envoys as well as through other measures, have a unique and important role to play in conflict prevention. We, therefore, support the ideas contained in the report for strengthening the Secretary-General's traditional roles in this area by, for example, increasing the use of interdisciplinary United Nations fact-finding and confidence-building missions in volatile areas, developing regional preventive strategies with relevant regional organizations and establishing an informal network of eminent persons for conflict prevention. All of those efforts, however, must be made in an appropriate manner and in accordance with the Secretary-General's mandate as derived from the relevant provisions of the Charter.

We also share the view that ad hoc groups of friends of the Secretary-General can be useful in supplementing the Secretary-General's conflict prevention activities. It is of course crucial that relevant countries, including those with the capacity to contribute to the conflict prevention efforts, be included in such groups of friends so as to ensure that they are truly effective in working out measures for conflict prevention. I would also like to emphasize that those groups should include representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and other development-oriented organizations, as appropriate, in order to respond to economic requirements of the conflict-affected areas.

It is clear that effective conflict prevention will be an increasingly important area of United Nations endeavour in the years to come. Effective conflict prevention will require joint as well as independent actions, as the situation requires. Japan will continue to actively participate in conflict prevention efforts, as well as in efforts to devise an effective conflict prevention mechanism within the United Nations system, bearing in mind the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country.

The next speaker is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Pal (India): It is a particular pleasure, Sir, to see you back in New York and to speak to the Council under your presidency.

When the Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention was presented last week, and when a quick glance showed that much of it dealt with conflict management, the Secretariat said that this was because management prevented conflicts from escalating. In

that sense, though, peacekeeping prevents conflicts from being resumed, and, as it shades over into post-conflict peace-building, prevents conflicts from recurring. Conflict prevention would therefore stretch from early warning to post-bellum peace and development.

But if everything is conflict prevention, nothing is. It is much more sensible to see conflict as a disease of the body politic, and to follow the medical distinction among prophylaxis, cure and therapy. Conflict management and peacekeeping are the curative phase, post-conflict peace-building the therapeutic. This discussion should be on prophylaxis: on ways and means to prevent armed conflict from breaking out within societies and between them.

There are paragraphs in the report described as recommendations, some of them directed to the Council. But when the report was introduced last week, we were told that the Secretary-General was simply throwing up issues for discussion among Member States, not making recommendations. Today, of course, the Deputy Secretary-General has told us that these are indeed recommendations, but we would encourage the Council to see this meeting as a debate on the sections of the report that fall within its mandate, not as an exercise to accept or reject recommendations. We will speak in broad terms on principles that, followed by Member States or by the Council, could stop conflicts from breaking out.

Within societies, democracy is a must. Societies in which citizens can openly air their grievances; choose their governments in free, open elections; have a say, through elected local bodies, in aspects of governance that touch their daily lives the most; and get redress when they need it from an independent judiciary that upholds the rule of law, are far less likely to erupt into domestic conflict than those under totalitarian or military rule. The United Nations should continue to encourage democracy as a norm of governance that lessens the chances of conflict.

Between States, treaties must be honoured. Once States have accepted treaties designed to prevent conflict and to offer a route to the peaceful resolution of disputes, they must abide by their provisions. The League of Nations foundered when it looked the other way as bilateral treaties that had kept the peace were systematically subverted, and it was unable to prevent a global slide into conflict. Again, it was the experience of Europe in the inter-war years that totalitarian regimes brushed aside treaties negotiated by their democratic predecessors.

States must also accept and act on the norms of international law and on the principles adopted by the United Nations to guide relations between States. The founding principle of the United Nations is that disputes will be settled peacefully and patiently at the negotiating table, not through armed conflict. States must commit themselves wholeheartedly to this. Trying to undermine those with whom they have tensions, using covert force or terrorism, is not only cowardly; it is self-defeating. The United Nations should reject the specious argument that the knife in the back is the only weapon of the weak. That is not a plea accepted in a court of domestic law, and it should not be accepted here.

The International Court of Justice has a role in the peaceful settlement of disputes, defined by the Charter and the terms under which each Member of the United Nations has accepted its jurisdiction. But there are other judicial bodies, such as the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which quietly settle disputes affecting vital economic and other interests that, in other eras, would have boiled over into conflict. While those bodies should be supported, the Council might wish to consider if the ad hoc tribunals it has set up, without any authority under the Charter, and which now cost about 10 per cent of the regular budget of the United Nations, have really helped to prevent conflict.

Conflicts are prevented if States are assured of their security and do not feel that they are under threat. Military alliances might give their members a sense of greater security, but history has shown that these alliances goad others into taking counter-measures, provoke tensions, and eventually lead to conflict. Most of the permanent members of the Council have, at one time or the other, belonged to powerful military alliances; some still do. They might wish to consider whether these alliances prevent conflict, when, during the cold war, they were the cause of tensions that threatened constantly to brim over into conflict.

Conflicts are provoked by States that have been encouraged into militarism. Conflicts are more likely if States believe they can profit from them. Conflicts have been encouraged by arms sold irresponsibly for profit, and conflicts have been both set off and sustained by arms races, often induced by military

alliances pursuing policies of balance of power. We need a fundamental review of the security of States in order to find genuine collective security at progressively lower levels of arms; only this will truly prevent conflict.

Nuclear war is clearly the conflict that must be prevented at all costs: de-alerting, no first use, and commitments not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States are all practical steps that must be taken to reduce nuclear dangers. Nuclear disarmament must have the highest priority. Only a multilateral compact for the time-bound abolition of nuclear weapons will give the world true security. No theory or doctrine can justify the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons by the permanent members of the Council. If they cling to their weapons, others will follow, even if against their will.

At the other end of the spectrum, small arms and light weapons are what most conflicts are now fought with. Because these weapons are now both so lethal and so easily available, they have made terrorists and warlords immensely more powerful and deepened the vulnerability of Governments that have to counter them through means available to democracies. We were concerned, therefore, that the Firearms Protocol, recently negotiated in Vienna and adopted by the General Assembly, should have such wide exceptions to its scope. We will see what the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects next month comes up with, but Article 26 of the Charter also gives the Council a role in the regulation of armaments. Using it creatively, the Council could make it harder for terrorists and violent non-State actors to get access to weapons, and easier to take steps against their suppliers.

What the Council should not do, either under its elastic definition of security, or because it is lost in the emptiness of this report, is rush into areas where it has no role to play. HIV/AIDS should be a horrible example for the Council, which last year decided that it was a security problem and Blue Helmets a risk factor. The Council never explained how spreading this canard either helped the fight against AIDS or kept the peace, unless it was telling Governments that if they went to war, it would send them pox-riddled Blue Helmets to keep the peace afterwards, and felt this would be such a terrible threat that no State would dare breach the peace. Maybe this was what the Council did have in mind, because, after it adopted its resolution with much fanfare and an African State asked that peacekeepers sent to it by the United Nations be screened for HIV/AIDS, both Council and Secretariat, appalled that they should have been taken at their word, have been pressing it ever since not to insist.

With that, I hope, salutary reminder, I thank members for their attention.

The President: I thank the representative of India for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I am pleased, Sir, to express to you my deep satisfaction at seeing you preside, for the second time, over the work of the Security Council during Bangladesh's presidency of the Council. I am certain that the work done by the Council under your presidency will be successful.

A number of delegations that spoke before me have called for the General Assembly to continue to play the role entrusted to it by the Charter in the domain of conflict prevention. We find this approach relevant and believe it merits our support. In addition, we were pleased to hear that the President of the General Assembly will be organizing a similar debate next month on this very important issue. But, since I am speaking to the Security Council, I would like to submit a number of remarks regarding items in the Secretary-General's report that have attracted our attention and that I believe are important to refer to.

First of all, there are paragraphs 36, 37 and 39 and recommendation 3 regarding the Secretary-General presenting informal periodic reports to the Security Council and the formation of a subsidiary body of the Council perhaps for every situation, region or area that requires it. These are matters that are best, or should be best, approached with extreme caution and care. The dividing lines between what constitutes a threat to international peace and security and what falls within the scope or responsibility of a specific government are extremely fuzzy and obscure in many cases. On the other hand, determining the point at which the Security Council may or should intervene in a specific conflict that threatens international peace and security is a very complicated issue on which there may be many views and opinions. The Council should make a decision only if there is complete unanimity. I am not speaking here

about clear cases, such as those of foreign occupation, or clear violations, such as ethnic cleansing. Intervention by the Council in such cases is part and parcel of the responsibility entrusted to it under the Charter of the United Nations.

Secondly, the fact that the Secretary-General would enhance his traditional role in the prevention of conflicts is a matter that we welcome within the framework of checks and balances established by the Charter regarding his role and the responsibilities of the principal bodies and organs of the United Nations. We also welcome the report's statement that the work of the Secretary-General in the area of conflict prevention should be carried out in full cooperation with the concerned countries and parties. But we have a question about recommendation 9, regarding the enhancing of the traditional role of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention, in particular about improving the Secretariat's capacity and resource base for preventive action. We would like clarification from the Secretariat. What do they mean by this recommendation? Before concluding on this point, I would like to state that the confidence we have in the Secretary-General to choose the so-called network of eminent personalities and figures to help in the prevention of conflicts should not stop the Member States from having a role in determining the criteria by which these figures and personalities are to be selected.

Thirdly, we were extremely disappointed reading paragraphs 86 to 93, regarding disarmament. We have not found a single reference to any other kind of weapon that threatens international peace and security besides small weapons. While we fully understand the threat posed by these weapons to the security of communities, particularly in cases of intra-state civil strife and conflict, nevertheless the report should not have ignored the importance that many countries attach to achieving nuclear disarmament and to addressing the problems posed by other unconventional weapons, the existence of which threatens whole communities and societies. We call on the Secretary-General to correct this lapse as soon as possible.

We have a number of other comments on points in the report of the Secretary-General. We will deal with them in our statement to the General Assembly during the discussion of this issue.

Allow me before concluding, however, to refer to a lapse that surprised us. Paragraph 77 of the report gives a list of examples of areas in which there are missions supported by the Department of Political Affairs. Among these examples there is a reference to "the Occupied Territories". Our understanding of this reference is that it applies to the occupied Palestinian territories. If our understanding of this is correct, and this is most likely, we wonder how this lapse in referring to Palestine occurred in this context. Is this a deliberate error, despite the many different reviews to which such a report is subjected? We are posing this question to the Secretary-General in all seriousness so that he can rectify such error or lapse, and so that he can find out how such an important report could be issued with such an incomplete and truncated expression.

What we find positive about the Secretary-General's report is the proposed coordination between the principal bodies in the field of conflict prevention. We call on the Security Council to increase its coordination with the General Assembly, which has the more general and comprehensive role in the field of conflict prevention, and with the Economic and Social Council when required. The result should be one policy and one vision for the Organization in this very important field.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Mexico. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Navarrete (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is delighted that you, Sir, are personally presiding over this open debate of the Security Council. I also wish to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh for his conduct of the work of the Security Council during the present month. In particular, we are grateful for the convening of this meeting to examine the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflicts.

The Charter of the United Nations refers to prevention in Article 1, when it points out that the first of its purposes is "to take effective . . . measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace". However, in the course of its history, the Organization has devoted itself remedying conflicts more than to preventing them. The change towards a culture of prevention, proposed by the Secretary-General, is even supported by popular wisdom; it is often said that an

ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This change therefore helps to restore logic to the priorities of the Organization.

My delegation welcomes the report that is before us today. The importance of its numerous recommendations calls for careful analysis by delegations and Governments. We therefore appreciate the fact that the President of the General Assembly has scheduled plenary meetings next month to consider the report in depth. Today, I will limit myself to presenting some initial reflections.

The delegation of Mexico fully shares the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly make more active use of the powers bestowed upon it by the Charter. The General Assembly, the most democratic and universal organ of the United Nations, should recover the central role that the Charter assigns to it, as recognized by our heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration.

A first step to strengthen the coordination between the two organs would be, as suggested in the report, to increase the consultations between their two Presidents, not necessarily at fixed intervals, but rather, as often as the circumstances require. It becomes increasingly necessary to define clearly the sphere of competence of the Security Council vis-à-vis that of the General Assembly.

The role that the Security Council can play in conflict prevention is undoubtedly important, especially in implementing the provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter. However, for the United Nations to be successful in conflict prevention, more effective actions should be promoted through other bodies that are directly responsible, such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the specialized agencies of the system. One must wonder whether the Security Council has the structural capacity to launch major actions to address the root causes of conflicts and thus prevent their eruption. What it can undoubtedly do is to contribute to the prevention process in the areas within its mandate. It is self-evident that one of the most effective ways to prevent a conflict is to address the causes that can trigger it. If we bear in mind that poverty, discrimination and the lack of economic prospects are among the most recurrent causes of conflicts, it is not difficult to conclude that prevention-related topics and actions should be at the core of the General Assembly's and the Economic and Social Council's work.

Economic and social problems such as the ones I mentioned are not, of course, the only cause of conflicts. However, as long as the Organization does not strengthen its effectiveness in promoting development in all its aspects, it will not be possible to prevent the emergence of conflicts. In this regard, Member States should be responsible for providing reliable information on the progress achieved and the limitations faced in meeting the most pressing needs of their populations.

The role of the Bretton Woods institutions is of great importance for the prevention of conflicts inasmuch as they can help channel more resources towards the promotion of development. The protection of civilians must be understood in a broad sense, including the implementation of development programmes that ensure the well-being of populations.

Full respect for human rights and the fight against the scourge of drugs and against transnational organized crime also constitute fundamental pieces of a culture of peace. We must recognize that the consumption, traffic and production of drugs, as well as the crimes associated with this phenomenon, regrettably constitute an increasingly significant source of conflict. The recommendations of the Secretary-General to strengthen the work of the Organization in these fields are therefore correct and timely.

My delegation has taken note with particular interest of recommendations 14 and 15, on disarmament issues. The Government of Mexico considers that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles constitutes the main topic of the international disarmament agenda, because of its implications for international peace and security. The question of missiles should be the object of multilateral negotiation to establish an international legal framework conducive to the prevention of armed conflicts.

Mexico will continue encouraging the adoption of measures aimed at consolidating the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, including the universalization and full validity of the various international treaties on the matter, as well as the negotiation of new bilateral and multilateral agreements whose objective is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, as a step towards the agreed goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

My country supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General that measures be adopted to prevent the misuse and illicit transfers of small weapons. The forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will provide an opportunity for the international community to adopt an effective programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate their production and illicit traffic. Mexico is committed to the success of that Conference.

Fighting against impunity is a priority that the Government of Mexico fully shares. As does the Secretary-General in his report, we recognize the need to strengthen the action of the International Court of Justice and that the Statute of the International Criminal Court must soon enter into force.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General, most of the recommendations in his report have no financial implications. However, in the current situation my delegation is concerned by the proposal that prevention measures be financed from the regular budget. My delegation will participate in the debates that should take place on this question in the relevant organs of the General Assembly.

To conclude, I wish to commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to design and to promote a "culture of prevention", to which many have referred in the course of today's debate. We must all persevere in the task of transforming the United Nations into an Organization able to face successfully the challenges before it in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for the kind words he addressed to me and to Mr. Chowdhury.

The next speaker is the representative of Brazil. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): I join previous speakers in thanking the delegation of Bangladesh for organizing this open debate. It is a great honour to see you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of a truly peace-loving country, presiding over this meeting. Let me also convey our deepest appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive, thought-provoking and extremely useful report.

The strength of the ideals of the United Nations depends upon the identification of clear and feasible means to promote them. Without concrete tools of implementation the goals set in the Charter are empty words.

The report that we are analysing is rich in concrete proposals and concrete suggestions on actions that must be taken with the fundamental purpose of this Organization to prevent conflicts. We appreciate the able way in which the report identifies the main sources of concern of Member States and we hope that it can foster a renewed commitment towards a genuine culture of prevention.

The first merit of the report, in the view of my delegation, is the way in which it addresses conflict prevention as a cross-cutting issue. Indeed, the implementation of an effective strategy of prevention must involve the whole United Nations system, its main organs and all other relevant non-United Nations actors and stakeholders. Thus, improved coordination is indeed key to ensuring that we can harness and realize the potential for prevention that exists in activities undertaken by the Organization in a vast array of areas.

Conflict situations are far too complex to be dealt with just through a traditional security approach. It is not necessary to theorize about the distinctive nature of today's conflicts. Suffice it to glance at the recent involvement of the United Nations from Haiti to East Timor, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. The deployment of peacekeepers is only one of the tasks performed by the United Nations in today's conflicts. In all these regions, many United Nations agencies, funds and programmes provide a wide range of assistance, from short-term relief to long-term development efforts.

Success in solving one specific problem in conflict situations depends on tackling several other intertwined issues. To illustrate this, let me just ask a few simple questions. Is it possible to talk about durable peace in the midst of deprivation and extreme poverty? How can we expect fragile peace accords to hold when perpetrators of crimes against humanity go unpunished? What can be done to ensure stability if peace agreements are not followed by genuine institutional reforms to allow all citizens to take part in the political life of a country? How can United Nations troops help to disarm and demobilize warring parties if there is no programme to reintegrate ex-combatants into civil life? And if these ex-combatants are children, can we move forward without building schools and providing for the basic needs of families?

As we see it, conflict prevention involves not only the best possible use of measures at the disposal of the Security Council, but also efforts in the areas of humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, reconstruction, post-conflict peace building and long-term development, which fall within the purviews of both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. But when should conflict prevention start? Does it always demand the presence of the United Nations in the form of a peacekeeping operation?

Any empirical model for action by the United Nations should not overlook the fact that, in the real world, we are not faced solely with visible cases of conflict. There are also potentially deadly situations in what I would call the invisible or only partially visible conflicts that we can witness throughout the world. Paragraph 7 of the report is illuminating in alerting us to the root causes that may remain latent for years before a conflict breaks out. If we read it in a positive sense, we have a perfect description of what is meant by a "culture of prevention". Indeed, in a world where social inequities are being reduced, tolerance is being promoted and human rights are being defended, the culture of prevention will be firmly grounded. We know, however, that this ideal — which, in the end, coincides with the very goals of the Charter — is still distant. We should make our commitment to achieving this culture of prevention ever stronger.

If we are to fully accept the implications of the concept of conflict prevention, the most difficult and sensitive challenge is to prevent conflicts where the United Nations has not yet established a peacekeeping presence or a mandate. The difference of approach needed in these circumstances is enormous and should not be overlooked. As the report recognizes, there is very little the international community can do if, for instance, the Government concerned denies the existence of a situation of imminent normalcy disruption.

As the report indicates, the Security Council has a central role in the maintenance of international peace and security, but the shared responsibility of all actors referred to in the report can turn out to be the very guarantee of a successful strategy. The idea of regular joint meetings between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council remains valid and could prove to be an excellent tool of coordination. We are very glad to note that President Holkeri has picked up this proposal in the context of the exercise on the revitalization of the General Assembly. Working together in a cooperative manner must be the mainstay of our strategy for preventing the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of armed conflicts.

The United Nations has had a mixed record in its attempts to cope with the complexity of preventing armed conflict. Some ideas put forward in the report may serve the purpose of enhancing our collective performance in this field. Brazil is particularly supportive of such proposals as those on measures to promote coherence and coordination and on fact-finding and confidence-building missions as useful tools in dealing with not-so-evident pre-conflict situations.

Today's meeting of the Security Council and the plenary meeting of the General Assembly scheduled for mid-July certainly show that there is political will to address the issue of conflict prevention in a comprehensive and realistic way. We hope that the United Nations and all stakeholders will be able to ensure a meaningful follow-up to the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for his kind words addressed to me and to Mr. Chowdhury.

The next speaker is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Yahya (Malaysia): At the outset, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to you, Sir, and to the delegation of Bangladesh for convening this open meeting of the Security Council to revisit this very important subject of the prevention of armed conflict, which the Council deliberated in the month of July last year.

I should also like to commend the Secretary-General for his important report, which reviews the progress that has been achieved in developing the conflict-prevention capacity of the Organization. The report also contains specific recommendations on how the efforts of the United Nations system in this field could be further enhanced, which my delegation particularly welcomes. Much has been said, not only today, on this particular subject. My delegation's statement will be relatively brief, since we have addressed the issue in a substantive manner on previous occasions before the Council.

My delegation agrees on the need for the United Nations to embark on preventive diplomacy and preventive action as a far better and more cost-effective approach, financially as well as in human terms, than mounting any operation or activity after a conflict has erupted. We also agree on the need for greater coordination and cooperation on the part of the entire United Nations system in the area of conflict prevention, including ways of enhancing its interaction and, particularly in respect of the mobilization of resources, in developing long-term conflict-prevention and peace-building strategies.

Malaysia supports the efforts that the United Nations, regional, subregional and other international organizations have undertaken to make conflict prevention a priority. We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General continues to pursue these noble efforts alongside these organizations to further enhance a comprehensive approach by drawing on regional preventive strategies. Better coordination with these groups will only strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations, including the Security Council. More frequent contacts between the Council and the leaders of the regional and subregional organizations would provide useful opportunities to exchange information and examine situations in which preventive action might be deemed necessary and the involvement of the Security Council desirable.

In any meaningful discussion by this Council on the prevention of conflict, one cannot but also address the issue of the Middle East, especially the Palestinian question and the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. The plight of civilians caught in conflict in the area, particularly the Palestinian civilians, is pertinent to our discussion today. We are all aware that the conflict is the most protracted one since the establishment of this Organization, and the situation there demands an international presence, namely, the United Nations. It is a matter of deep regret to my delegation that earlier initiatives by the non-aligned members of the Council to prevent further conflict through the establishment of a United Nations monitoring force were not successful, resulting in an increasing number of deaths and injuries, mostly on the Palestinian side. We cannot turn a blind eye to instances of foreign occupation and the effect that such occupation has on regional and international peace and security. We strongly believe that the presence of a United Nations or international force to monitor the situation on the ground would have been a tangible manifestation of this Council's concern for conflict prevention. Malaysia once again urges the Council to give serious consideration to the establishment and dispatch of such a force.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's intention to initiate a practice of providing periodic regional or subregional reports to the Security Council on threats to international peace and security. It is my delegation's earnest hope that in coming up with such periodic reports, the Secretary-General will continue to further consult the relevant regional or subregional groups that would be in the best position to provide the necessary information. We also believe that the Council will continue to benefit tremendously from timely and in-depth briefings by the Secretariat on potential conflict situations brought to the attention of the Council by the Secretary-General. To a certain extent, Member States with the capability to do so can assist the Secretariat through regular sharing of vital information pertaining to threats to peace and security; but this is, at best supplementary in nature and cannot replace the Secretariat's own independent means of information-gathering and analysis.

The activities just mentioned can be further expanded by the use of the Council's fact-finding missions. These missions, which vary in their purpose and objective, can indeed have important preventive effects. My delegation welcomes the suggestion made by the Secretary-General that these fact-finding missions could be further enhanced through multidisciplinary expert support so that all substantive areas could be incorporated into a comprehensive prevention strategy. We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to set up expert working groups of the Council to monitor volatile situations and consider options to prevent the outbreak of violence. My delegation also agrees with the recommendation to expand the use of the Arria formula or other similar arrangements for informal discussions and exchanges of views outside or inside this Chamber. These arrangements have been used before.

My delegation concurs with the point made by the Secretary-General on page 3 of his report that "[t]he time has come to translate the rhetoric of conflict prevention into concrete action ... It is axiomatic that effective preventive action will require sustained political will and a long-term commitment of resources by Member States and the United Nations system as a

whole if a genuine culture of prevention is to take root in the international community." What is pertinent now is for the Council to act on these important ideas and proposals, lest it be accused of continued inaction on this important subject. Let us all hope that this latest report of Secretary-General as contained in document S/2001/574 will mark a beginning in that direction.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for his kind words addressed to me and to Mr. Chowdhury.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): My delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. We are very happy to see you presiding over these deliberations today, and we wish you well. We have confidence in your ability and hereby wish to assure you of our support and cooperation. I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General not only for the very important and comprehensive report placed before us, but also for his tireless efforts for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Conflict prevention in all its ramifications refers primarily to measures that can be implemented before a dispute escalates into violence. It also refers to measures designed to counteract the spread of conflict to other areas. The basic premise of prevention, therefore, is that actions should be initiated at the earliest possible stage of a conflict. To be effective, preventive action should, among other things, address deep-rooted socio-economic, cultural, environmental, institutional, and other structural causes of conflicts.

According to the United Nations Charter, conflict prevention is a primary obligation of all Members. Although Article 24 of the Charter bestows on the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, our experience has shown that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests mainly with national Governments, with civil society playing an important role. A successful conflict prevention strategy therefore will require the cooperation of all United Nations actors, including the Secretary-General, the International Court of Justice, United Nations agencies, offices, funds and programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Although Article 24 of the Charter bestows on the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, a successful conflict prevention strategy will require the cooperation of all, including the Secretary-General, the International Court of Justice and other United Nations agencies.

In the face of limited financial and human resources, and given the fact that it is more expensive to maintain a peace-keeping operation than to implement conflict prevention measures, the Nigerian delegation believes that there is a need for members of the international community to focus more on the development of a culture of conflict prevention. We should also focus on preventive investment instead of intervention in conflicts after many lives have been lost and much property destroyed.

We will urge the Secretary-General to continue the use of the tools of "quiet diplomacy," such as fact-finding and confidence-building missions, informal networks of eminent persons, mediation, conciliation and arbitration in his search for peace. My delegation supports the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report on the use of interdisciplinary fact-finding and confidence-building missions in volatile regions.

Considering the importance of the Secretariat to the success of the Office the Secretary-General in conflict prevention, adequate funds should be made available to the various departments to enable them to cope effectively with the complexities of today's conflicts. In particular, the Department of Political Affairs, which is the focal point for conflict prevention, should be provided with adequate resources and skilled manpower to enable it to discharge its responsibilities more effectively.

Considering the fact that the Security Council and the General Assembly have more than a symbolic role to play in the prevention of armed conflicts, my delegation endorses the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report to the effect that the General Assembly should make more effective use of its powers, as stipulated in Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the United Nations Charter.

In addition, my delegation endorses the recommendation that the Security Council should

consider the establishment of innovative mechanisms, such as a subsidiary organ or an ad hoc informal technical arrangement to stimulate the discussion of conflict prevention on a continuous basis.

The Nigerian delegation welcomes the recommendation to develop regional strategies that will involve regional actors in the resolution of conflicts. To this end, we appeal for financial and logistical assistance to regional organizations in order to enhance their effectiveness.

Conflict prevention and development that is sustainable and equitable are mutually reinforcing. Consequently, any investment in national and international conflict prevention efforts is an investment in sustainable development. We therefore call on the Economic and Social Council to pay more attention to the role of development in promoting long-term conflict prevention.

We also call on the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant United Nations agencies to address the issues of drugs and illicit trade in arms and natural resources emanating from conflict areas, because of their role in fuelling conflicts.

On the issue of human rights, the Nigerian delegation believes that both the short-term and long-term strategies for the prevention of armed conflicts must include a focus on strengthening respect for human rights and addressing core issues of human rights violations. We welcome the recommendation that the Security Council and the General Assembly should make use of information and analyses emanating from non-governmental organizations, particularly on human rights violations, in their deliberations on conflict situations.

We support the need to strengthen the International Court of Justice, and encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes, as stipulated in Article 2, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter. We also urge Member States to ratify or accede to human rights treaties and the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In order to enhance the capacity of the United Nations for the prevention of armed conflicts, there is a need to strengthen the national capacity of Member States. My delegation therefore believes that if the various recommendations and measures highlighted in the Secretary-General's report are supported with the necessary resources, better results will be achieved.

Because of the role development plays in conflict prevention, we appeal to the international donor community to increase the flow of development assistance to developing countries, as we pray Member States to endeavour to implement the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Financing for Development.

In conclusion, while conflict prevention lies at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations, our achievements towards this end have been minimal. In spite of identified constraints, we must strive towards the achievement of our collective interest. The most promising approach for promoting the peaceful and just international order envisaged in the Charter is to build national and international capacity for long-term action to prevent armed conflict.

The President: I thank the representative of Nigeria for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of South Africa. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa): May we first take this opportunity to welcome you, Minister Azad, and to congratulate your country on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We congratulate you and your delegation on the excellent manner in which you have conducted the large volume of work in the Council thus far. We also wish to thank you for convening this meeting on a subject that we believe is central to the very existence of the United Nations. My delegation would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his excellent and comprehensive report, which guides our debate today.

It was through our determination to save humankind from the scourge of war and violent conflict that we founded this Organization. However, more than 50 years after the founding of the United Nations, peace among and within nations remains elusive. This is demonstrated by the multitude of crisis situations under consideration by this organ. These realities are a stark reminder of how far the United Nations has to move to realize its original principles, contained in Article 1 of the Charter, in which we

accept a duty "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

Indeed, South Africa not only subscribes to the ideals of the United Nations Charter, but also, through its own history, knows very well the importance of searching for ways to avoid armed conflict and establish durable peace.

Our own experience has convinced us that the prevention of armed conflict requires the establishment of institutions of democratic governance, the rule of law and the protection of fundamental human rights, including the right to development. These values have also found greater acceptance among the leaders and the people of the African continent, as demonstrated by the adoption of a number of declarations that aim to highlight the interdependence of peace, democracy and development. However, our efforts to promote and institutionalize these values and principles will not be fully realized without an enabling international environment in which we can deal with the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment.

It is from that vantage point that my delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General on his efforts to create greater awareness of the need to develop a culture of prevention, not only among Member States but also among other important actors in the international arena. The report before the Council today is an important step in those ongoing efforts. Since the Secretary-General's report was issued only a few days ago, my delegation wishes to limit its intervention to a few preliminary remarks on those aspects that deal with the work of the Security Council.

In addition to Article 1, Chapter VI of the Charter places a moral and legal responsibility on the Security Council to play a key role in the prevention of armed conflict. Until recently, its approach had been to wait for conflicts to develop into violence and even war. The Security Council would then intervene through costly peacekeeping operations, which at times served only to freeze the conflict and which failed to address its root causes. My delegation therefore welcomes the recent trend for the Security Council to dispatch fact-finding missions to areas of conflict, such as the recent missions to Kosovo and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the broader Great Lakes region. Those missions provide valuable impetus to local and regional peacemaking efforts and also provide the Council with valuable first-hand insight into the dynamics of a particular situation.

Recently the Secretary-General has also used an innovative mechanism, that of the inter-agency task forces, to create greater international awareness of the challenges confronting particular countries or regions in crisis. These task forces could play a valuable role complementary to that of the fact-finding missions of the Security Council, and consideration should therefore be given to the harmonization of the two approaches.

We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Security Council should consider establishing innovative mechanisms such as an informal working group to discuss prevention cases on a continuing basis. Early warning inputs, including periodic regional or subregional reports from the Secretary-General, would be invaluable to such a working group. The Council could also, through the Arria formula, engage interested parties that might be able to provide valuable information and support with respect to preventing conflict. The Security Council could thus shift its activities much more into a proactive, preventive mode by enhancing its early warning capacity.

Undoubtedly, regional organizations have a crucial role to play in the prevention of armed conflict in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. The efforts of the Organization of African Unity in the conflicts in the Comoros and between Ethiopia and Eritrea are a concrete demonstration of that role. We concur with the Secretary-General's assessment that the coordination of prevention efforts between the United Nations and regional organizations could benefit from a more targeted and substantive interaction. One area that comes to mind in that regard is the sharing of information and analysis on a particular situation. It is our view that there is a need for greater inclusion of regional perspectives in United Nations analysis of a particular conflict situation.

The Security Council should urgently focus on the practical steps that can be taken to become more proactive. The Council must demonstrate the political will to carry out its mandate in an equitable and consistent manner, and with greater determination. In that regard, it is also imperative that the Council's structure and working methods be reformed to be more equitably representative and to take account of the new

realities of complex conflict situations. A credible and effective Security Council is an important step in our collective search for sustainable peace.

The reality in many countries is that war and poverty feed on each other. My delegation therefore concurs with the assessment that meeting the challenge of sustainable peace and security in that context requires a multifaceted and comprehensive approach which addresses the root causes of conflict. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General, these challenges cannot be met by a single actor or entity but require the involvement of a wide range of actors, each with its own comparative advantage. The Security Council can certainly do its part by taking practical steps to ensure that we fully realize the vision we embraced in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations and in the purposes and principles set out in its Chapter I.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for the kind words she addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Iraq. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Douri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this public meeting of the Security Council on the prevention of armed conflict. We wish also to convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts in this field, particularly as he works to move the United Nations from a culture of reacting to conflicts to a culture of preventing them before they erupt. We hope that the Council's deliberations will lead to the implementation of the ideas and conclusions set out in the report of the Secretary-General that is before the Council in document S/2001/574.

There is no doubt that the prevention of armed conflict lies at the core of the United Nations mandate. The clearest evidence of that is the fact that the first words of the United Nations Charter express a determination

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind".

The primary purpose of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security. If international and regional conflicts were once a result of the cold-war climate that then prevailed, the past decade, which saw the end of the cold war, was marked by regional and civil strife that was more brutal, more tragic and more devastating than the conflicts of the cold-war era. It has claimed millions of victims, as well as giving rise to millions of displaced persons, refugees and disabled persons and massively draining economic and human resources.

The result has been the emergence of a single super-Power, which continues to give priority to its own interests only and to impose its hegemony on international relations, while attaching no importance to the principles and purposes of the Charter or to the norms of international law as these conflicts erupt and continue.

The Charter entrusts the General Assembly with a role in the maintenance of international peace and security and in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, particularly in Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter. Yet the fact that the Security Council has expanded its mandate, thus exceeding the terms of reference of the General Assembly, has led to a diminished role and reduced competence of the Assembly. We would like, therefore, to reaffirm the importance we attach to the restoration of the role of the General Assembly and to the continued discharge of its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter. We hope that the discussions that are currently under way to reform and revitalize the role of the General Assembly, which are being conducted by the President of the Assembly, will lead to a reactivation of the role of the General Assembly in the area of the prevention of armed conflicts.

My delegation supports the expansion of the role of the Secretary-General in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, particularly since Article 99 of the Charter refers to this question. The Security Council, in this case, should encourage the initiatives proposed by the Secretary-General and refrain from any action that might cause him to fail in his task.

We would like to note here that, although the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, it does not deal with areas of conflict in a balanced and objective manner. Indeed, it acts selectively, in the hegemonistic interests of some of its member States. Sometimes it acts quickly in a specific area; at other times, it prefers to procrastinate and prevaricate, despite the fact that the risks posed by the conflict in

question might be far greater than those posed by the one in which it took speedy action.

The international community is still unable to understand why the Security Council took no action in the Great Lakes region in Africa despite the many signs of imminent genocide. The genocide that occurred in April 1994 could have been prevented. The Council had many opportunities to deal with the question.

In this context, I would recall that one member of the Security Council – the United States of America – supported by the United Kingdom, endeavoured to stop the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution calling for the provision of protection to the unarmed and defenceless Palestinian people, who daily are facing, under Israeli occupation, the most brutal forms of torture and killing. Those two countries tend to tailor Security Council resolutions to suit their imperialistic interests. They continue to perpetrate acts of aggression on a daily basis against my country, Iraq, under the pretext of the so-called no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, which have no basis in relevant Security Council resolutions. Hundreds of innocent civilians have fallen victim to this continued aggression, and property and infrastructure continue to be destroyed.

The most recent of these acts of aggression was perpetrated by United States and British aircraft on 19 June 2001 in northern Iraq. Twenty-three children and young people were killed on a soccer field, and the Security Council did nothing, despite the fact that the Iraqi Government sends a letter every week to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council concerning these continued acts of aggression.

Conflict prevention must not depend on political and diplomatic necessities. Such measures will not succeed for long, because the real causes of the conflict will persist. Armed conflict is but a manifestation of hunger; poverty; underdevelopment, due to the plunder of the wealth of the countries of the South during the colonialist era and the resulting inequitable distribution of wealth between the countries of the South and those of the North; the continuing intervention of hegemonistic States in the internal affairs of other countries; restrictions on the political independence and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of certain countries; the pitting of certain countries against one another through religious, ethnic and racial disputes; and the starving of peoples through the application of sanctions, whether unilateral or under the auspices of the United Nations.

All of these are the real causes of armed conflict. If we do not deal with them, we have no hope of preventing such conflicts from erupting.

Finally, my delegation believes that it is imperative to expand and revitalize the role of the International Court of Justice and of regional and subregional organizations in order to resolve current problems and address their root causes, because we believe that those organizations have a very important and vital role to play in resolving the problems of their respective countries.

The President: I thank the representative of Iraq for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): First of all, Sir, let me say how happy we are to see you here once again, presiding over a meeting of the Security Council on a subject that is so vital and important to all of us. I should like to take this opportunity to compliment the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, for conducting the affairs of the Council with remarkable ability and skill.

I will begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the prevention of armed conflict. Although the report took some time to mature, we are pleased to note that the Secretaries-General of this world body have always shown personal interest in conflict prevention and dispute settlement. We laud the efforts of the present incumbent in this connection. We only hope that his good offices will also extend to those disputes that still remain before this Council, unresolved and outstanding. Two instances are worthy of his special attention because a lot of blood is flowing in these cases. These are Kashmir and Palestine. Both are cases of continued denial of the peoples' right to self-determination. Both caused wars and are still the scenes of armed conflicts between the struggling people and the occupation forces.

Now that the Secretary-General's re-election has been sealed thanks to the exemplary leadership that he provided to the United Nations, we hope he will have no hesitation in assuming a more proactive role to facilitate a peaceful solution of the two issues. For

modalities he does not need to await the final verdict on his report. Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter has enough relevant material for him to work with.

Now as to the report itself, well, there is much in it to be commended. We appreciate the seriousness of purpose with which the Secretary-General and his able team have worked on this report, and we compliment them. Much as one would like to go along with its contents, we cannot help but disagree with some of its basic premises and assumptions. There are some underlying contradictions.

For instance, we do not think that Member States and civil society alone have the primary responsibility for conflict prevention. While they may have some responsibility in cases of intra-State conflicts, this does not hold true for cases of inter-State conflicts. In instances where two or more Member States are involved, the ultimate responsibility rests with this intergovernmental world body, this being one of its obligations under the Charter.

Please note that the word "conflict" does not figure in the Charter even once, but this does not mean that the United Nations should absolve itself of the responsibilities assigned to it under both Chapters VI and VII for the pacific settlement of disputes and the maintenance of international peace and security. There is also no justification for selective implementation of the Security Council resolutions on the flimsy basis that some resolutions are more sacred than others because they carry the seal of Chapter VII. The Council should not act selectively or discriminate between regions and situations. It must implement all its resolutions and decisions.

If conflict prevention is the primary responsibility of national governments and civil society, then what is the *raison d'etre* of the United Nations? If that were the case, we would be turning to Amnesty International or perhaps the Ted Turner Foundation for intervention, rather than to this Council. But we do not, and this is because the United Nations and no other institution has the primary role in conflict prevention. And conflicts are prevented through the peaceful settlement of disputes. Neither conflicts nor disputes can be wished away. Closing eyes to them or shifting responsibility is no solution and will be of no service to this Organization.

The Secretary-General's report rightly states that the earlier a conflict-prone dispute is identified and addressed successfully, the less likely it is that the situation will deteriorate into violence. But a conflict can be addressed effectively and successfully only if this body, and in particular the Security Council, has the political will to do so. Too often this vital catalyst is conspicuous only by its absence, and too often good intentions have fallen victim to political expediency and power politics. As a result, disputes are allowed to fester and potentially dangerous situations allowed to explode. Bloody conflicts erupt and nations implode while the Council remains indifferent, like an ostrich with its head in the sand.

Even when the report tries to address potential conflicts, it has a tendency to confuse root causes of conflicts with their symptoms. Such misdiagnosis is often followed by a tendency to prescribe one set of medicines for all maladies. All potential future conflicts are assumed to be intra-State rather than both intra- and inter-State ones. All root causes are essentially described — I am referring to what was mentioned in the report — as economic and social, thereby ignoring the obvious political causes, which in fact are the real underlying reason for most conflicts and disputes.

A simple glance across the globe will show this reality. There is no social or economic genesis to the conflicts in Palestine or Kashmir. Both are a legacy of political injustice and a manifestation of ongoing repression. Similarly, the conflicts in the Balkans, the Horn of Africa and the African Great Lakes region cannot be attributed to social and economic causes alone. Poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and poor governance are the symptoms, not the causes, of these conflicts. The underlying political reasons in all these cases are too well known. Hammering away at socio-economic factors is an oversimplification of the matter. There are other deeper and intractable causes of all major conflicts and disputes which the Secretary-General's report has not been able to address.

Only a couple of months ago, in a similar debate in this body, I spoke of the inability to address the root causes – political expediency, the lack of political will and the failure of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to honour its Charter obligations – as the main reasons for two of the most persistent conflicts that have been afflicting our own region. Ironically, it is the dichotomy of approach on the part of the Council which is causing this situation. Kashmir and Afghanistan are the classic examples of selectivity. Selectivity on Kashmir is seen in the Council's total

inaction and inertia on its own resolutions and selectivity on Afghanistan is manifest in the excessive enactment of punitive measures and so-called smart sanctions, which have been hurting only the 25 million innocent people of Afghanistan. The fact is that, in both cases, conflict continues, peace remains elusive and human misery is being aggravated.

There should be no discrimination in the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council on the basis of their adoption under Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the Charter. Such distinctions are irrelevant. Technicalities of this nature cannot be applied to a situation involving the destiny of a people or when there is a serious threat to the peace and security of a region. After all, both Chapter VI and Chapter VII are part of the same Charter.

Therefore, it will come as no surprise that we, who have seen the United Nations fail to prevent or resolve conflicts so close to us, will be sceptical about how it intends to prevent conflicts in the near or distant future. We feel that this report, in spite of some positive elements, offers no solution to the misery of millions of people in our region.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's sincere efforts to tackle this complex subject in his comprehensive report. The answer to many questions, in our view, still lies in the faithful implementation of the provisions contained in the United Nations own Charter. Some of the provisions in particular need to be highlighted. For example, paragraph 1 of Article 1 commits the United Nations to taking effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace. This gives the United Nations the lead role in conflict prevention. Under Chapter VI of the Charter, conflict prevention, as part of the pacific settlement of disputes, is established as a major function of the United Nations. Article 34 allows the Security Council to investigate situations which might lead to friction or dispute threatening international peace and security. Articles 36 and 37 lay out the responsibilities of the Council in preventing or resolving a dispute. The Secretary-General, under Article 99, also has a responsibility to bring to the notice of the Security Council any matter which may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. This does not restrict the Secretary-General from using his good offices, fact-finding missions and personal envoys to prevent conflict. Article 29 of the Charter allows the establishment of subsidiary organs of the Security Council to assist it in its functions. Such mechanisms may be used to address conflict prevention on a continuing basis, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report.

While the Charter is clear on what needs to be done, the United Nations, including its Secretary-General, as well as the Security Council and the General Assembly, have to play their part in implementing these provisions. Not doing so on the basis of political expediency or mere technicalities would be a disservice to the Charter itself. We are hopeful that, when the General Assembly takes up this question, it will give substantive consideration to the report. In addition, in our opinion, the international community must be guided by certain broad parameters in its actions on the prevention of armed conflicts.

Pakistan will continue to remain actively involved in all the discussions in the United Nations on the prevention of armed conflict, an issue which is of vital concern to us. I wish to voice our support for the Secretary-General's pledge to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, and finally to a culture of peace and prosperity, the twin goals of the United Nations. In doing so, I reaffirm Pakistan's cooperation and support for the international community's efforts to prevent armed conflicts, in keeping with our commitment to global peace, collective security and the honour and dignity of peoples all around the world, as well as their progress and prosperity.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kinds words addressed to me and to Mr. Chowdhury.

The next speaker is the representative of Belarus. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Laptenok (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me at the outset to welcome you, Sir, as President of the Security Council. We also welcome the initiative of Bangladesh to open this issue for general discussion. It complements the work done by your country and by the Non-Aligned Movement, of which Belarus is a member, in many other areas of international cooperation.

Like the more general question of protecting international security, the issues of preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention are becoming

increasingly universal. The political, economic, environmental, social, humanitarian, information and many other components of preventive activities are coming to the fore. Long ago, preventive diplomacy ceased to be a mere goal in response to the Charter tasks of the United Nations, and became a concrete, practical reality requiring joint efforts not only by the members of the Security Council but by all the States Members of the United Nations. It is obviously necessary to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, as the Secretary-General puts it in his report.

Clearly, because of specialization in the work of the United Nations system, not all causes of conflict can be addressed by the Security Council. Other bodies in the United Nations system can make an equally useful, sometimes unique, contribution to the Council's work. We envision an overall pattern of interaction that would strictly adhere to the division of powers and competence among United Nations bodies. Some problems are common to the Security Council and to other bodies, and here we must identify a number of priorities: we need to design mechanisms for the timely definition of the modalities of interaction between the Security Council and other organs, including the dispatch of multi-task fact-finding missions, confidence-building missions and so forth. We think that here there can be a special role for mechanisms and models for interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council, between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council and between the International Court of Justice and the Security Council, as well as interaction involving other bodies within the United Nations system with respect to specific conflict-prone regions. The basis for such interaction is to be found in the Charter and in other instruments to which previous speakers have referred.

We think it would significantly facilitate the Council's addressing of such questions in the context of preventive diplomacy to ensure the earliest possible detection of factors that could give rise to conflict situations; to create the conditions necessary for sustainable socio-economic development in countries subject to tension and in conflict-prone areas, with particular attention to Africa; to help make real progress in poverty eradication and in addressing problems of inequality and security; to put an end to all activities that threaten to cause the violent disintegration of States or to cause their boundaries to be redrawn; to halt the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons; and to ensure the sovereignty of States over their natural resources, which is particularly important for States in destabilized areas.

There is an important role for the revival of economic activity in areas suffering from slow development; in general, greater investment for sustainable development needs to be encouraged. More active use should be made of the resident coordinator system of the United Nations Development Programme in coordinating projects and in implementing social and economic development programmes in affected countries, all in close coordination with donor countries and with the local authorities. The international community should provide adequate resources to strengthen national and regional potential for conflict prevention. South-South cooperation should be encouraged. There is much else besides.

We feel that the problems caused by flows of refugees are a reason to supplement preventive diplomacy with comprehensive international programmes under United Nations auspices targeted at countries in destabilized areas. We also favour enhancing the role of United Nations civilian police contingents as an effective factor in preventing the escalation of conflicts, as well as in halting them.

For our part, we intend to make an active contribution to the work of the Security Council in this sphere.

The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations bodies cannot fail to address another destabilizing factor: the growing scale of terrorism. All States must pool their efforts with those of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to fight terrorism. That is a worthy common objective for the Security Council and for the whole family of organs and agencies of the United Nations system.

No less urgent from the standpoint of ensuring the proper conditions for stability and sustainable national development in a number of regions is the problem of combating HIV/AIDS. The work of physicians and other specialists operating in African countries, which are the most severely affected by this problem, is the focus of a great deal of attention not only in the affected countries themselves, but throughout the world. This will be the focus of the special session of the General Assembly to be held next week.

The orientation debates held by the Security Council have virtually turned the Council into a standing open-ended working group for discussion of the most urgent items on its agenda. But we need significant improvements in the apparatus for extracting the distillate from those debates: their practical outcome. This must be done through in-depth consideration of the views of States that participate in the discussions. We think that the Security Council should pay particular attention to that issue.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Nepal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): It is my particular honour to be speaking in this Chamber today, with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of a fellow South Asian country in the Chair. On behalf of the Government and the people of Nepal, Sir, I wish to congratulate you, your country, Bangladesh, and your able team here in New York, led by Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, on your sterling service to the cause of least developed countries and of developing countries in general, and on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I congratulate you also on having so promptly organized this important open debate on the prevention of armed conflict. Allow me also to put on record our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, whose comprehensive and optimistic report on the subject of this debate is before the Council today.

Despite frequently being highly praised for its virtues, the prevention of armed conflict remains one of the least practised aspects of the pursuit of international peace and security. However, we note with encouragement that this situation seems to be changing for the better. While the Security Council is meeting today to consider the subject for the second time since last July, the Secretary-General has established by empirical evidence that prevention can be comparatively economical and cost-effective. That is in addition to saving lives, property, social constructs, the sense of common humanity and the environment for development.

What is alarming, though, is the Secretary-General's candid confession that, despite these great virtues, preventive strategies will not be easy to implement. The fear is that, once the policies and strategies for prevention are on the table, the political will and the commitment of resources required for their implementation may perhaps be lacking. Nevertheless, we must respond to the call of the day by moving forward, and forward we will move.

The maintenance of international peace and security is the primary responsibility and obligation of the United Nations. This duty demands that all appropriate measures be taken to prevent potential armed conflicts around the world, with full commitment to the principles of the political independence, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all States. Failing this, the Organization will be unable fully to fulfil its purposes and principles under the Charter, according to which it seeks to maintain international peace and security and to promote socio-economic development, the rule of law, human rights and justice.

The sheer nature and magnitude of the work required to prevent potential conflicts speaks loud and clear: any effort that does not involve all actors at all levels and in all spheres will be incomplete at best and counterproductive at worst. The process must be comprehensive in its analysis and holistic in its approach. Therefore, although the Security Council is charged with the immediate responsibility of preventing armed conflicts, it cannot, and must not try to, do so alone. Given the multifaceted nature of the subject, the Council needs the full cooperation of all other principal organs, funds and programmes of the Organization, as well as that of many other partners outside the United Nations system.

An issue so wide in scope and so central to the core mandate of the United Nations cannot be dealt with on an ad hoc basis with bits and pieces of isolated efforts, and in an atmosphere lacking mutual trust and confidence. With the Security Council and the Secretary-General on the front lines, all principal organs of the United Nations must be fully and visibly taken on board. There should be absolutely no effort to undermine or subordinate any organ's contribution to, or involvement in, the process. For the sake of humanity, whose trust this Organization was created to keep, the entire United Nations system and its international partners must act together, in a synchronized manner, with full faith in the power of their ability to prevent armed conflicts. Based on this strong conviction, my delegation welcomes the efforts

of the Secretary-General to examine and analyse the potential roles of each principal organ of the United Nations, as well as those of other organizations and partners, to forge coordinated policies and strategies.

As the lead Organization in these global efforts, the United Nations must first of all strengthen its capability to support national Governments in conflict prevention. Interdepartmental coordination and inter-agency coherence need to be promoted and sustained. Interactions with relevant regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector must take place in order to achieve greater synergy and complementarity. All aspects, ranging from the role of the media to assistance for women and children, and from drug abuse, disease and crime to human rights and food security and disarmament programmes, need to be dealt with in tandem. A strategic analysis of the vast amount of information existing in the Organization and resulting from expert fact-finding missions may be of immense use in the process.

Peacekeeping has a distinct role in preventing the recurrence of conflicts. When armed conflicts erupt, the seed of deadly bitterness remains for a long time. The situation becomes sensitive to the smallest of provocations and susceptible to the recurrence of violence. While peacekeeping missions primarily seek to restore normalcy and keep peace, they also need to manage peace until a point of sustainability is reached, from where the relevant national Governments can take it up. Post-conflict peace management is crucial to ensure the continued solace of security to peoples in order to heal the wounds inflicted. Disarming combatants and reintegrating them into mainstream society to build a common future together is quite a daunting task. Indeed, the close involvement of troop-contributing countries is always a prerequisite for success.

There is clearly no better forum than the General Assembly to deal with the entire range of issues relevant to the prevention of conflicts. We are familiar with the usefulness of the Assembly's previous deliberations and its relevant resolutions on this issue. My delegation is particularly pleased by the fact that the President of the Millennium Assembly has already scheduled a general debate on the subject in the light of the report of the Secretary-General. We believe that this is the way it should be. My delegation also believes that the involvement of the Economic and Social Council in the process is equally urgent.

It is time for us seriously to embrace the suggestion of the Secretary-General that conflict prevention be made the cornerstone of collective security under the United Nations in the present century. This should involve a full understanding of the concepts of sustainable peace and security and sustainable development, and a close focus on the complex inter-linkages between these concepts and their building blocks, including social and economic development, democratization and the rule of law.

Let me hasten to add, however, that the premises on which we should base our principles and strategies should in no way fail to capture the essence of the existing inter-linkages of all elements involved. It is important that the Secretary-General has taken as a premise of his report that conflict prevention and sustainable and equitable development are mutually reinforcing activities. He elaborates on this idea by stating that an investment in national and international efforts for conflict prevention must be seen as a simultaneous investment in sustainable development, since the latter can best take place in an environment of sustainable peace.

My Government strongly believes that the reverse is equally true. Empirical evidence suggests that most of today's conflicts have erupted because of extreme poverty and the multiple problems associated with it. Sustainable and equitable development may be the only durable way to prevent such potential conflicts in future. We remain convinced that an investment in sustainable development must also be taken as a simultaneous investment in conflict prevention, and that the necessary additional resources should be ensured for the development of conflict-prone and very poor societies.

While the prevention of armed conflicts is a collective obligation of Member States, the United Nations must be prepared to assist national Governments in building their capacity in the area of conflict prevention. With the inter-linkages between poverty and conflict firmly established, there can be no better way to meet this obligation than to enable national Governments to eradicate poverty and improve the socio-economic standards of living of the ordinary people. We all know what unemployment and an empty stomach can do to people. My delegation believes that this is where the crucial role of the Economic and Social Council fits in. We hope that, in due course, the Economic and Social Council will also take up the call of the Secretary-General

to examine the question of addressing the root causes of conflict and the role of development in promoting long-term conflict prevention strategies. The contribution of the Bretton Woods institutions would also be invaluable in the process.

Nepal concurs with the view that the sooner preventive measures are taken, the more chances they stand of being effective, and it fully supports the concept of the culture of prevention that the Secretary-General envisages and the membership strives to achieve. We believe that the increased use of preventive deployment definitely serves this purpose. However, we are aware that a true culture of prevention demands long-term, arduous and often carefully planned and implemented policies and strategies. It is often outside the realm of short-term operational measures of prevention, instead involving long-term preventive measures of a structural nature. A preventive strategy, to be successful, requires complementary, cooperative and mutually reinforcing partnership roles among the principal organs of the United Nations, its system-wide funds and programmes, family-wide organizations and agencies, as well as all possible actors. We all have due roles to play in the consistent implementation of coherent measures.

The success of preventive measures is contingent upon the sustained political will of, and a long-term commitment of requisite resources from, all stakeholders. While my delegation appreciates the Secretary-General's determination to work towards building a culture of prevention within existing resources, insofar as possible, we remain convinced that an institutional strengthening of the key organs of the Organization, and their reorientation where necessary, would be crucial in strengthening the capacity of national Governments to prevent conflicts. We also encourage the Secretary-General to effectively pursue his good offices for the purpose of prevention of conflicts.

To conclude, we believe this fresh process towards creating a genuine culture of prevention faces us as a test of our true conviction, our political will and our sincerity of commitment to put in place the preventive measures and necessary resources commensurate with the root causes of all potential conflicts. For our part, we pledge our full support, and we would like to remain confident that the membership will survive this acid test before it is again too late.

The President: I thank the representative of Nepal for his kind words addressed to me and to Mr. Chowdhury.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset I would like to express our great pleasure at seeing you, Mr. Minister, preside over the deliberations of the Council as it debates this important subject. Also, I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation for the truthful and courageous positions taken by Bangladesh, a friendly country, during its membership in the Security Council, and the extraordinary effort made by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in this regard.

I would also like to express thanks to the Secretary-General and to welcome his tireless efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations in the prevention of armed conflicts and in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular have a clear responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security. From our perspective, this requires the promotion of a global environment that is anchored in the principles of respect for the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations, and the end of what has become known as the "culture of reaction". This also requires the enhancement of the principle of peace, anchored in justice and fairness and the right of peoples to self-determination, especially those who continue to languish under foreign occupation.

In this context we welcome all efforts aimed at promoting the roles of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the International Court of Justice, as well as the role of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I would like to make three specific remarks regarding the report of the Secretary-General, on the understanding that we shall make a more detailed statement before the General Assembly when it considers such report.

First, we have noticed for some time now that the reports of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat regarding the various aspects of armed conflicts, including this report under discussion today as well as reports issued earlier on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and other documents, have all avoided — for reasons that we do not fully understand — addressing foreign occupation as being one aspect of armed conflict. These reports have also avoided specific reference to the Israeli military occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, as well as other Arab territories occupied since 1967.

Paragraph 77 of the report before us today refers to "Occupied Territories", but this is unclear, as if those territories belonged to the moon. Especially at this point in time, this lapse is unacceptable and difficult for us to understand, because the Israeli occupation and its illegitimate practices pose a threat to peace and security not only in the region, but also to the entire world.

Secondly, this tendency in the reports, whether by commission or omission, reflects a serious disregard for the imperatives of international law and international humanitarian law, as well as the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine. It is unacceptable that the question of foreign occupation and what it represents in terms of violations of principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as the threat that it poses to international peace and security that falls within the responsibility of the United Nations – particularly the Security Council – should be left to the wishes and policies of occupying authorities.

Thirdly, the failure of the Security Council to play any meaningful role during the past nine months regarding the ongoing events in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, in the face of the oppression and brutality inflicted upon the Palestinians, and the failure to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, indeed represent a challenge to the credibility of the Security Council and its ability to fulfil its duties in a firm and consistent manner that is free of double standards.

The Security Council has, in fact, been prevented from fulfilling its obligations under the Charter, vis-à-vis the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. This actually undermines the credibility of the Council regarding the prevention of armed conflicts and the achievement of peaceful resolutions of such conflicts. We, for our part, look forward to a rectification of this anomaly.

The President: I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations for his kind words addressed to me, to Bangladesh and to Mr. Chowdhury.

We had a very substantive and focused discussion on the prevention of armed conflicts. I thank all participants for their constructive and extremely valuable contributions.

From the discussion that we had today, I find that the principles and recommendations presented by the Secretary-General have been received positively.

The Fourth High-level Meeting between the United Nations and the regional organizations in February marked a major step in strengthening cooperation on conflict prevention.

The momentum created by the release of the report and today's discussion should be maintained.

As for the Council's action, it is my understanding that members of the Council may continue its discussion of the recommendations within its competence. The Council will take an early decision on the recommendations specifically addressed to it.

The prevention of armed conflict is one of our primary obligations under the Charter. Let us live up to our solemn pledges to save the peoples of the United Nations from the scourge of war.

There are no further speakers on the list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.